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SUBJECT: DASD BRZEZINSKI'S SEPTEMBER 22 MEETING WITH
TURKISH DCHOD BASBUG

REF: ANKARA 5266

Classified By: Ambassador Eric Edelman, Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶11. (S) Summary: In a wide-ranging discussion on the U.S.-Turkish security cooperation relationship during their September 22 meeting, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense (DASD) Ian Brzezinski and Deputy Chief of Turkish General Staff (DCHOD) Ilken Basbug agreed on the need to elevate the level of our bilateral dialogue and to move beyond recent strains over Iraq to strengthen our traditionally close relationship. DCHOD Basbug confirmed Turkey's acceptance of International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) VII command responsibilities in Afghanistan and expressed a open mind regarding the potential unification of Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) and ISAF. Basbug registered the GoT's unhappiness with U.S. handling of recent U.S. military action in Talafar, Iraq and raised concern over a perceived Kurdish effort to change the demographics of Kirkuk. Regarding the U.S. request to establish a Cargo Hub at Incirlik Air Base, Basbug said that TGS had submitted its response to the government and was awaiting an answer. He also noted that TGS was ready to discuss the U.S. proposal for weapons deployment training. Basbug complained that USG restrictions on the transfer of military technology hampered military purchases and said that the tenders for attack helicopters, Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) and main battle tanks, which were canceled in May, would be re-issued. End Summary.

¶12. (U) Additional participants in the meeting included Ambassador Eric Edelman, Chief of the Office of Defense Cooperation MG Peter Sutton, OSD Turkey Desk Officer Lisa Heald, Embassy Deputy Pol-Mil Counselor Maggie Nardi, Turkish J-5 Strategy Division Chief, MG Cengiz Arslan.

STRENGTHENING THE STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

¶13. (C) DCHOD Basbug shared DASD Brzezinski's view that our two countries should elevate the level of our bilateral dialogue beyond discussions of day-to-day issues, to develop a strategic partnership on issues of mutual importance based on our shared values and goals. He added that Turkey was open to re-negotiation of the DECA if the U.S. desired, but had no specific interest in doing so. DASD responded that DECA reform wasn't needed as much as stimulating U.S. and Turkish companies to get together. The U.S. had facilitated the EXIM Bank and IMF loans and reinvigorated the Defense Industry Cooperation (DIC) process. The American Turkish Council (ATC)-sponsored conference on September 28-29 was also a good step in the right direction.

¶14. (C) Noting that it took five years to negotiate one side letter to the DECA, DASD stated that one should define what objectives were to be served before beginning negotiations on the DECA. He added that U.S.-Turkish cooperation extended beyond the confines of DECA and NATO and that previous dialogue on a DECA had been unproductive and divisive. It would be best to avoid this issue if we can move forward on other issues. This could include joint exercises and training, Turkish efforts within the Middle East Peace Process (MEPP) and a GoT response to the U.S. request to establish a Cargo Hub at Incirlik and to the question raised by PM Assistant Secretary Lincoln Bloomfield and Hoehn in June (Note: Whether the GoT would consider a request to permanently station 48 F-16s at Incirlik. End Note) would expand our ties and comprise a partnership. Basbug confirmed his agreement.

INCIRLIK

¶15. (S) DCHOD Basbug noted two outstanding U.S. requests that required a GoT response. He said TGS had submitted its response to the government on the Cargo Hub request and was awaiting an answer. On Weapons Training Deployment, Basbug said that TGS was ready to begin talks at U.S. convenience. Despite a prompting, Basbug did not comment on the Bloomfield/Hoehn question whether Turkey would consider a proposal to permanently base F-16s at Incirlik if such a request was to be made.

AFGHANISTAN

16. (C) Basbug confirmed GoT plans to assume command of ISAF VII in February 2005. He emphasized that Turkey would not be able to stay beyond August, when its six month commitment would end. In response to a question on Turkey's view of the potential for unifying OEF and ISAF, Basbug claimed no particular position. In his view the question was command of the unified structure. He wondered if NATO would have the resources or interest to take on this responsibility. DASD inquired how Turkey would adjust its Rules of Engagement for the ISAF VII command, noting Turkish caveats on the use of force outside of Turkey's AoR and prohibitions against engaging in crowd control. Basbug recognized this issue and agreed that Turkey's constraints needed to be considered.

IRAQ

17. (C) Basbug stated that, as a neighboring country and a U.S. ally, Turkey wanted the coalition effort to be successful, but added that both U.S. interventions in Iraq had had a devastating impact on Turkey. He raised a host of issues on Iraq:

18. (S) Talafar: Basbug complained that the Turkish LNO chief assigned to Mosul had been unable to tour Talafar until September 9 or 10, after the operation had ended. Up until that time, TGS was unaware of the action taking place and unable to make an adequate assessment of the situation. Even now, he said, he still didn't know the true number of casualties. In Basbug's opinion, while the military didn't question the operation, the U.S. handling of it created negative feelings within the Turkish military, which was working hard not to let the situation affect our bilateral relationship. The Military had to take into account public sensitivities to the concerns of Turkmen, who comprised 80-90 pct. of the Talafar population. Basbug expressed discomfort with the misstatements in the press that implied Turkish awareness of the operation before it took place and therefore Turkish participation in the action. Ambassador Edelman reminded Basbug of the Embassy's actions to correct the press reporting and enumerated the steps taken by the Embassy to advise the USG at every level of the GoT's concerns, and to provide the GoT with up-to-date information, including satellite imagery. DASD Brzezinski said that GoT concerns about the Turkmen population were foremost on the USG mind and that particular care was taken during the operation. He underscored that GoT statements about the indiscriminate use of force were unhelpful and that inaccurate GoT statements to the press only fueled public outrage.

19. (S) Kirkuk: Basbug called Kirkuk the real issue in northern Iraq. He characterized Kirkuk as very volatile, "an explosive bomb" with the potential to become the Kosovo of Iraq. Basbug underlined that the "special status" of Kirkuk should be maintained and noted that contradictions in the Transitional Administrative Law (TAL) confused the situation.

While the TAL linked Kirkuk to the central government, one particular article calls for a decision on Kirkuk's status to be made in the future while another said the current status should be maintained. Noting the census scheduled to be conducted in November, Basbug suggested that Kurds were making a concerted effort to shift the demographics of Kirkuk back to its pre-Saddam status, before Arabs were forcibly moved into the city and Kurds expelled. According to Basbug, around 2,000 Kurdish families were forced to leave Kirkuk in the late 1950's, but recently 14,000 Kurdish families have moved in, suggesting this was an attempt to register an increased Kurdish population in the census. At the same time, the cancellation of the property rights law meant that anyone with Iraqi citizenship could make a property claim, which would facilitate the perceived Kurdish resettlement effort. At the same time, he claimed that almost 50 thousand Arabs have left Kirkuk since spring 2004. Basbug recommended following the last census taken in using the demographic numbers contained in the last census taken in 1957. He warned that anything serious that transpired in Kirkuk would impact the rest of the country and that the U.S. was the only country that could keep an eye on the situation.

10. (S) Turkish Truck Drivers: According to TGS accounts, 80 Turks have been kidnapped, of which 29 had lost their lives. Turkey had the highest number of citizens abducted. He asserted that he did not want the information to become public as it would have a devastating impact. He urged special measures to protect drivers traveling south from Mosul. Ambassador outlined USG proposed measures for increased contact between the Interim Iraqi Government (IIG), the Iraqi military, U.S. military and private companies.

11. (C) Iraqi National Army: Basbug said that, according to TGS information, 35-40 pct. of the INA is comprised of Kurds. The entire population should be proportionally represented.

An imbalance today could create problems for tomorrow.

¶12. (S) Iranian Activity: Basbug said he was unsure about the level of Iranian activity in Iraq. He had read that a 150-person VIP assassination team may have official Iranian backing, and thought that individual Iranians could be among the insurgents. In response to DASD's question regarding Turkish pressure to discourage Iran from engaging in Iraq, Basbug was ambiguous.

TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER

¶13. (C) Basbug expressed frustration with the restrictions on the transfer of U.S. technology. Limitations on the use of such technology after a project was completed often denies Turkey full potential benefit out of its investment. Basbug added that, despite repeated requests, U.S. companies have not provided line item costs for technology inputs, making it difficult for TGS to make the necessary cost/benefit comparison. Turning to the canceled attack helicopter tender, Basbug noted the Turkish request for mission computer source codes. He questioned the value of having the source codes if they could not be incorporated into new products. Turkey would like to build onto U.S. technology in order to advance other projects. Basbug said Turkish needs for the attack helicopters, as well as the main battle tanks and UAVs remained and that a new tender, with different terms, would be issued, possibly this year. He was unsure whether U.S. companies would participate given the certification and guarantee requirements that will be requested. DASD stated that the cancellation of the three contracts in May was frustrating. If Turkey had engaged in more consultation with the U.S. the process may not have been so drawn out or the cancellation such a surprise.

¶14. (U) This cable was cleared by Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense Ian Brzezinski.
EDELMAN